

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 AID-05 EB-08 TRSE-00 OMB-01 SAB-02
EUR-12 COME-00 OES-07 DHA-05 NEA-10 AF-10 /134 W
-----063942 121929Z /45

R 121723Z SEP 77
FM AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5292
INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY KINGSTON
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
USMISSION USUN
USINT HAVANA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGSC GY, US
SUBJECT: GUYANA FOREIGN MINISTER'S AUGUST 27 PRESS CONFERENCE

REF: GEORGETOWN 2025

BEGIN SUMMARY. DURING HIS AUGUST 27 PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE PANAMA CANAL TREATIES(REFTEL FONVN WILLS ALSO COMMENTED FAVORABLY ON AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S VISIT TO GUYANA CHARACTERIZING IT AS AN "IMPORTANT POLITICAL EVENT....IMPROVING RELATIONS..." HE LAUDED THE NEW HIGHER PRIORITY THE US ADMINISTRATION WAS ASSIGNING TO LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. AFTER SAYING THAT PAST US POLICY ON CUBA HAD "POLLUTED RELATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA" HE WELCOMED PRESENT EFFORTS TO NORMALIZE US-CUBAN RELATIONS. HE INDICATED THAT THE US APPEARED TO BE INTERESTED IN ASSISTING GUYANA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. GUYANA'S FOREIGN MINISTER, FRED WILLS CALLED A PRESS
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CONFERENCE AUGUST 27 PRIMARILY FOR THE PURPOSE OF RESPOND-
ING TO THE US REQUEST FOR A STATEMENT SUPPORTIVE OF THE
PANAMA CANAL TREATIES. THE FULL TEXT OF HIS STATEMENT
ON THE TREATIES WAS TRANSMITTED REFTEL. HIS COMMENTS
ON AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S VISIT, US-GUYANA RELATIONS, AND OTHER
SUBJECTS OF INTEREST, AS TRANSCRIBED FROM A RECORDING ARE
HEREIN.

2. AMBASSADOR ANDREW YOUNG. ASKED ABOUT THE GOG REACTION TO ANDREW YOUNG'S VISIT WILLIS SAID: "THE ANDREW YOUNG VISIT WAS AN IMPORTANT EVENT IN THE CONTEXT OF IMPROVING OF RELATIONS BETWEEN GUYANA AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. AS YOU ARE ALL AWARE, WE HAD REACHED THE STAGE AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE REPUBLICAN ADMINISTRATION, JANUARY 20, 1977, WHERE OUR AMBASSADOR WAS RECALLED AND WHERE THEIR CHARGE HAD BEEN RECALLED. FROM THAT TIME FORWARD BOTH SIDES HAVE BEEN WORKING FOR A RESTORATION OF AMICABLE RELATIONS. IT IS DIALOG IN WASHINGTON AND DIALOG IN GEORGETOWN. WE HAD THE VISIT OF HABIB AND THEN THE VISIT OF ANDREW YOUNG. IT COULD BE SEEN IN THAT CONTEXT. IT COULD BE SEEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GENERAL TREND IN LATIN AMERICA, OF THIS NEW ADMINISTRATION NOT WISHING TO ACCEPT POCKETS OF INSURMOUNTABLE PROBLEMS IN THE ATTEMPT TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH CUBA, ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH JAMAICA AND GUYANA. IN A SENSE IT MEANS THAT LATIN AMERICA IS ONCE MORE A PRIORITY AREA. I LAUD THIS, NOT ONLY BECAUSE DURING THE RECENT YEARS WHEN WE HAD PROBLEMS IN VIETNAM AND ELSEWHERE IT WAS CLEAR THAT LATIN AMERICA WAS NOT A HIGH-PRIORITY AREA FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. NOW THE FEELING THAT HAS BEEN RESTORED IS THAT THE SENSE OF PRIORITY IS CLEAR, AND YOUNG'S VISIT IS PART OF THAT."

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3. US-CUBA RELATIONS. "WELL, I ALWAYS FELT THAT IT WAS ILLOGICAL AND ABSURD THAT THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TRADES WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND DOES NOT TRADE WITH CUBA. TO MY MIND IT IS LACK OF LOGIC AND LACK OF DIPLOMATIC SENSE HOWEVER YOU WANT TO PUT IT, AND THE CONFRONTATIONAL ASPECT OF AMERICAN CUBAN RELATIONS HAVE POLLUTED RELATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA. ONE HAD TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF THAT EQUATION WITH EVERY POLICY WHEREVER YOU WERE IN LATIN AMERICA. THE ATTEMPT TO NORMALIZE AND HAVE FRIENDLY RELATIONS IS MORE CONSTANT WITH MY VIEW OF COMMON SENSE OF HISTORIC NECESSITY AND GEOGRAPHIC CONTINUITY, SO I AGREE WITH PRESENT ATTEMPTS THAT ARE BEING MADE ON BOTH SIDES TO FORMALIZE IF NOT NORMALIZE RELATIONS."

4. US ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. A REPORTER ASKED ABOUT THE CONVERSATIONS THAT DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR OF AID ABELARDO VALDEZ HAD HAD DURING THE EXTRA DAY HE SPENT IN GUYANA AFTER AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S DEPARTURE AND WHETHER THE US WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE REBUILDING OF THE RICE STORAGE FACILITIES WHICH HAD BEEN BURNT DURING AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S

VISIT. THE MINISTER RESPONDED THAT VALDEZ HAD REMAINED BEHIND TO FOLLOW UP ON CONVERSATIONS THAT THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT HAD HAD WITH AMBASSADOR YOUNG. THE US OFFICIALS HAD NOT DELINIATED PRECISE AREAS OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH GUYANA, BUT VALDEZ HAD DONE AN INSPECTION. HE WOULD HAVE MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON AND FURTHER DISCUSSIONS WOULD BE CONDUCTED IN GEORGETOWN. WILLS ANTICIPATED THAT SOME ASSISTANCE PROPOSALS WOULD EMANATE FROM THOSE DISCUSSIONS. THE US DEFINATELY APPEARED TO HAVE AN INTEREST IN IMPROVING BILATERAL ECONOMIC RELATIONS AND WOULD BE INTERESTED IN PROJECTS IN GUYANA.

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5. ONE REPORTER ASKED ABOUT THE CHARGES EMANATING FROM THE OPPOSITION THAT THE IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES MEANT THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS SWINGING TO THE RIGHT. WAS THIS TRUE? WILLS REPLIED THAT TWO TO THREE HUNDRED US PRIVATE CORPORATIONS HAVE ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION. CUBA WAS SEEKING NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS, FISHING TREATIES AND TOURISM. ECONOMIC RELATIONS EXIST BETWEEN YUGOSLAVIA AND THE UNITED STATES AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES IN GENERAL. AN ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT NECESSARILY INVOLVE A SWING TO THE LEFT OR THE RIGHT. THEREFORE, THE QUESTION OF A SHIFT DID NOT ARISE.

6. CONCERNING OVERALL US POLICY, WILLS NOTED AN OBVIOUS CHANGE OF STYLE AND EMPHASIS. NOW THERE WAS AN EMPHASIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND ON NORMAL RELATIONS IN AREAS WHERE THERE HAD BEEN CONFRONTATION.

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7. ASKED ABOUT WHETHER THE BIGGEST ISSUES FACING UNITED NATIONS WERE THE MIDDLE EAST OR SOUTHERN AFRICA, WILLS SAID THAT ALTHOUGH THOSE WERE BIG ISSUES, THEY WERE NOT THE BIGGEST IN THE WORLD. DETENTE BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH, BETWEEN THOSE WHO HAVE AND THOSE WHO HAVE NOT, THAT IS THE BIG ISSUE, HE SAID. ALTHOUGH THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA ARE SERIOUS THREATS TO GLOBAL PEACE, THE REAL BASIC THREAT COMES FROM THOSE IN A POSITION OF DISADVANTAGE WHO ARE TRYING TO REACH LEVELS OF SUBSISTENCE. THUS, THE BREAD AND BUTTER ISSUE, THE ISSUE OVER WHICH SYSTEMS WILL FAIL OR SUCCEED WILL BE THE EXTENT TO WHICH ALTERNATE SYSTEMS AND GOVERNMENTS CAN DELIVER IN IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE OF A LARGE MAJORITY OF THEIR PEOPLE.

8. GUYANA-SOVIET RELATIONS. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT GUYANA-SOVIET RELATIONS, WILLS RESPONDED THAT THE GOG ESTABLISHED RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND HAD HAD DISCUSSIONS ON ECONOMIC COOPERATION. A TEAM OF EXPERTS CAME TO GUYANA IN SEPTEMBER 1976, AND GUYANA MADE AN APPLICATION FOR ASSOCIATION WITH THE CEMA COUNTRIES AS HAD IRAQ AND MEXICO. HE THEN SAID: "THAT IS AS FAR AS THE MATTER HAS GONE. THERE HAS BEEN NO MEANINGFUL ON-THE-GROUND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY BETWEEN THE SOVIET UNION AND GUYANA. WE ARE TO ESTABLISH A MISSION IN THE SOVIET UNION, BUT WE HAVE CONSTRAINTS ABOUT THIS." (BY CONSTRAINT HE MEANT FINANCIAL.)

9. GUYANA'S INVESTMENT POLICY. ASKED ABOUT FOREIGN PRIVATE INVESTMENT HE SAID GUYANA WOULD ACCEPT ALL KINDS OF INVESTMENTS PROVIDED THAT INVESTMENT IS NOT INCONSISTENT WITH NATIONAL OBJECTIVES. IN SENSITIVE AREAS THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NEED CONTROL. A MANAGED
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PARTNERSHIP WITH THE GUYANESE PEOPLE HAVING FULL CONTROL OF THEIR DESTINY AND THEIR RESOURCES IS NECESSARY. WITHIN THAT FRAMEWORK QUESTIONS OR FEARS OF NATIONALIZATION WOULD BE DEALT WITH. ONE PROBLEM IS THAT PRIVATE INVEST-

MENT USUALLY PRODUCES GOODS. THEY ARE NOT INTERESTED IN PRODUCTION OF SERVICES OR INFRASTRUCTURE UNLESS IT IS ACCOMPANIED BY SOME AUXILIARY PRODUCTS. THE NEED OF GUYANA AT THE MOMENT IS THE PRODUCTION OF STRUCTURES SUCH AS ROADS, RAILROADS, HIGHWAYS, ELECTRIC SYSTEMS, AIRWAYS AND THINGS OF THAT NATURE.

10. COMMENT: REPORTERS PRESENT DURING WILLS' PRESS CONFERENCE HAVE COMMENTED TO EMBASSY OFFICERS THAT THEY WERE SURPRISED THAT WILLS SEEMED TO GO OUT OF HIS WAY TO SPEAK WELL OF THE UNITED STATES. THE ONLY NEGATIVE ASPECTS WERE HIS REFERENCES TO PAST US POLICIES ON CUBA AND THE LACK OF PRIORITY GIVEN BY PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATION TO LATIN AMERICA. SIMILARLY, REPORTERS WERE STARTLED BY THE VEHEMENCE HE USED IN HIS STATEMENT--IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION BY TASS--ABOUT THE ABSENCE OF SOVIET ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. THE COMMENTS ON WELCOMING FOREIGN PRIVATE CAPITAL, WHILE POSITIVE IN TONE, WERE TOO VAGUE TO PROVIDE USEFUL PUBLIC POLICY GUIDELINES.
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